NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter will appear once a month to bring news and notes of interest to small computer users in Indiana. We are looking for a name for the Newsletter. Please send us your suggestions by September 1st. If you suggest the winning name, we will announce your name in the next Newsletter, and you will receive either a year's subscription to the magazine of your choice or a $25 gift certificate for Data Domain merchandise.

John V. Lombardi, editor

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO RAY BORRILL

We've received confirmation of our appointment as a dealer for the new NEC PC-8000 series personal computers. They're elegant, based on a 4 mhz Z80, and they come with color graphics and Microsoft Basic. The screen has 8 software controlled alphanumeric formats including 80 X 24 upper/lower case with true descenders. It has all the necessary goodies for independent software/hardware developers. Best of all, prices are competitive with Apple, TRS-80/3, Commodore, and similarly priced units. The machine is compatible with CP/M, even though NEC's operating system is entirely adequate for most things. The CP/M is just icing on the cake. NEC also offers the same BPI business package as the Apple. We expect our demo and first shipment in about 2 or 3 weeks.

I don't think the NEC is in conflict with the Apple II. Considering the established position of Apple, the extent, quality, and depth of available software (including color graphics games, etc., which can't be ignored in the market as we see it), the Apple II can't be hurt very badly by any new machine, at least in the near future. However, I think the NEC can compete very effectively with the Atari and various other Z80-based systems.

Roger Chapman is now with Cromemco, Thom Hogan is getting rich from his excellent book on CP/M and famous via his job with InfoWorld. Mike Talbott (remember him?) is climbing higher in Alpha Micro, and Mike Swaine is soon to achieve his ambition of being a writer, through a position with InfoWorld. I guess the rest of us are doomed to remain here, but who knows? We've hired David Roth to assume some of the duties of Mike and Roger. More about David next Newsletter, but suffice it to say that he is knowledgeable in several languages including COBOL, knows CP/M very well, and is already enthralled with the Alpha Micro.

We have a growing number of people on our customer list who we can call on to evaluate software, particularly for the Apple. It seems to me that we, as a group, should expand this capability. Ideally, we could develop a team which could provide rapid, local, objective evaluation of important software packages instead of having to wait for the random reviews which appear in InfoWorld, Creative Computing, Peelings II, etc.

If you have expertise in CP/M based applications, data communications, statistics, or any other specific area, and would be willing to evaluate software packages for dissemination to a local audience made up of users in Indiana and Kentucky, we would like to talk with you.

Ray Borrill

FROM THE APPLE-PIT

The Bloomington based Apple user group, IndianAPPLEus, is finally off the ground. An organizational meeting was held July 8th, club officers were elected, and the user group goals established. I demonstrated some new additions to my overgrown Apple, and a number of members made disk copies from the club's rapidly growing software library. The club will meet the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM in The Data Domain store. The commitment of the store facilities is much appreciated, as is the 5% discount offered to members of IndianAPPLEus. To get the discount you only have to present your membership card. The cards will be distributed to old and new members at the next meeting on August 12th. New members are more than welcome, so drop a line, give us a call at The Data Domain, or come to the next meeting.

The 6809 Mill card from Stellation for the Apple mentioned in the last column is now a reality. In fact, one such card now sits in my Apple. Two words describe the card: VERY IMPRESSIVE! The 6809 card, unlike the Z-80 SoftCard from MicroSoft, is in a true molti-processor configuration. A demo routine which arrives with the assembler package shows this quite clearly by executing two independent counting routines simultaneously on the system. With this particular demo the machine language 6809 routine can proceed uninterrupted while the Applesoft program is listed or run. The original board, (Rev. A), did have an operational conflict with the Z-80 SoftCard which prevented CP/M operation when the 6809 Mill was installed. A phone call to Stellation revealed a Rev. B card which was promptly sent in exchange. Correction of a defective CPU socket and an IC replacement, possibly required because of static problems due to a non-conductive shipping beggie, had the new card up and running with full SoftCard compatibility. During conversation with the folks at Stellation, I discovered that the San Diego APPLE-CORE purchased 12 of the 6809 cards at once, so we can anticipate some software developments from that direction.

The Mountain Computer (new name for Mountain Hardware) Expansion Chassis arrived, was installed, operated five minutes, and blew its fuse. It went back to Mountain Computer for switching power supply revisions and arrived back in Bloomington with two large, upright electrolytic capacitors sheared off at foil level. Obviously, some areas in the microcomputer industry are not too sophisticated with shake and drop quality control shipping tests yet. I guess that comes from a naivete soon lost by those of us associated with the consumer electronics industry. In any event, the parts were easily replaced and the Expansion Chassis has been working as advertised for several weeks now. The Expansion Chassis takes up one slot in the Apple II for its interface card but provides 8 additional slots for the trade. The 8 external slots in the Expansion Chassis are accessed by a bank switching technique, either by physically toggling a front panel switch on the Chassis or a software poke to an Apple memory location. The combination of the Apple and the Expansion Chassis provides 15 useable slots. The Expansion Chassis interface card is designed with a socket and jumpers to provide for identification of up to 4 Expansion Chassis in one Apple. Hmmm, let's see now, what cards would I choose for my 36 slots!

There are a number of other newsworthy items such as our experience with the 2,2 megabytes of the dual, double density, double sided Lobo drives on the Apple, but we'll reserve those for a later column.

John Prather

HALF-A-THOUSAND WORDS FROM SILICON GULCH

500 words, i slaved for almost five years with The Data Domain, then made the big time, and all they gave me is 500 words. Brevity was never one of my assets, but what the heck, if that's all the printing cost they can afford, I'll give it a try.

As many of you know, the lure of Silicon Gulch and an editorship at InfoWorld led me to leave the hinterlands late last year. After only a few months atop the San Andreas fault, i have noted a number of things about life in the micro fastlane.

THINGS HAPPEN FAST.--in the Midwest, news travels slow, innovations arrive a year after announcement, and anyone who wants to be up-to-date can delude himself into thinking he is. Not so out here in Siliconland. New products are introduced nanoseconds apart. Working prototypes of the machine that Big Company is going to introduce at next year's NCC make the rounds of the salivating news hungry like bees pollinating flowers. Contrary to popular belief, the state drug is caffeine--you need it to stay alert.

EVERYONE OWNS A COMPANY.--If you're looking for a business to make money at, try opening a print shop specializing in overnight delivery of letterhead. No one stays at any high technology firm for any length of time without developing a pet project which will be next year's new and upcoming software/firmware/hardware company. It's a tradition that began with larger computer manufacturers, but now we're seeing it in the micro marketplace as well: Lemon Computer Company spawns the Lemon Junior Computer Company spawns Lemon Technology Computer Company spawns Other Fruit Software Company, etc.

YOU CAN'T BUY STATE-OF-THE-ART.--I was convinced that I owned state-of-the-art computers and had kept them up to date when in the Midwest. Hah! I have three new computers (borrowed for reviews in InfoWorld) which make the older ones look like antiques. You can read my review of the Osborne I soon in InfoWorld. A curious thing is happening, though. Software plods along at a rather slow development pace while hardware changes every day. Thus we find that CP/M, not UNIX, is the first operating system for 16-bit computers, and that WordStar remains the pre-eminent word processor.

YOU DON'T NEED A MICROCOMPUTER.--I'm always amazed when I visit a microcomputer firm and find that they really haven't the faintest idea of how to use their own products. Almost everyone at Apple, for instance, seems to have a II or /// on the desk, but most seem to be using the Pascal editor as a word processor! A few have snuck out and bought SoftCards and are using WordStar, but not many. If the microcomputer manufacturers really don't know how to use their computer, how in the hell is the user going to know? Personally, after observation of the facts of life here in Silicon Gulch, i'm revising figures for growth of the micro marketplace downward; until someone figures out what's being sold to whom and for what purpose, the vision of a micro on every desk and in every home is only a mirage.

Thom Hogan

HALF-A-HUNDRED WORDS (EXACTLY) FROM SOMEWHERE OVER DENVER

THINGS HAPPEN FAST, EVEN AT THE DATA DOMAIN.--After Thom left, Carl Wilson went to Advanced Data Products, Roger Chapman to Cromemco, and I'm flying out to InfoWorld (Data Domain invades Silicon Gulch). Meanwhile, CP/M whiz David Roth has undertaken The Data Domain's software support.

YOU NEED A COMPUTER.--Obviously.

Mike Swaine

BUSINESS SOFTWARE FEATURE: THE VISICALC FAMILY

Most users of microcomputers have seen or used the Visicalc package from Personal Software. This is the electronic worksheet program that allows the easy manipulation of any data that can be represented on a worksheet. Visicalc is now available in a new version for the Apple DOS 3.3 operating system. The new Visicalc has enhanced features and a much improved manual. In addition to its own versatility and power, it also now has the ability to work with a family of business and data management packages for the Apple II. This family provides Apple II users with a virtually complete information management system.

The data manipulated in Visicalc can be used in Desktop/Plan II, a financial modeling package specifically designed to create budget and financial plans easily and quickly. Complex calculations and chains of tests are all supported in this sophisticated package which is the equal of many large computer financial modeling programs.

Whether the data is available in Visicalc or Desktop/Plan II, Visiplot and its companion program Visitrend will produce complex and elegant charts and graphs. In addition, Visitrend will provide descriptive statistics on any data series including mean, variance, standard deviation, and meximum and minimun values. Visitrend will also alow a wide variety of data transformations including lags, leads, percent changes, moving averages, and exponential smoothing. This powerful combination of Visitrend and Visiplot gives the business executive a rapid and flexible way to manage quantitative data and prepare dramatic and persuasive reports.

Most business and professional users of small computers need a free form information management system that will manage mailing lists, client files, notes, personal information, stock lists, and similar data. Visidex is exactly this kind of flexible information management system. It imposes no restrictions on the format or content of the data, and it will retrieve whatever you want by whatever cross references you think appropriate. For users with more structured data management requirements, the CCA Data Management System may be appropriate. It, like all the programs in this family, will accept and transfer data to the other programs in the family.

This series of package programs gives the owner of an Apple II computer exceptional computing power at a relatively low cost. Best of all, the packages interchange data and are very easy to use.

THE DATA DOMAIN GAME OF THE MONTH: SPACE EGGS
--WIN A FREE GAME FROM THE TOP 5--

The Data Domain Game Hour is from 10 to 11 AM, Tuesday through Saturday. Come in any day in the month from August 14th to September 12th and play the Game of the Month. You can play it twice during the month, either both times at once, or at any two times during the month. When you play, you ask a Data Domain employee to record your name and the high score from your game. On September 19th we will award prizes. The First Prize will by any game in the Top Five Games. This month, those Top Five are: RASTER BLASTER, SPACE EGGS, SNOGGLE, THE WIZARD AND THE PRINCESS, and POOL 1.5. Other prizes will be announced later.

Come in to The Data Domain and try your skill on this month's game.

THE DATA DOMAIN BOOK SALE

The Data Domain stocks a large selection of small computer books from games to business applications to programming manuals. Not only are there copies of all the Apple manuals, for instance, but there are books on microprocessor programming in assembly language, books on basic programming for business, books on every conceivable subject related to small computers and their applications.

During the month of August and until September 12th, every book in the store will be on sale at a 10% discount. This includes programming manuals, technical manuals, games books, business books, and even the new bestseller on the Apple disk operating system.

This last item, Beneath Apple DOS, is an outstanding discussion of all the features and characteristics of the Apple disk system. It is written for those interested in programming, but it contains valuable information for any user of the Apple Disk II. This book is so useful that The Data Domain has been sold out of its supply almost immediately after each shipment.

In addition to the item on the Apple DOS, we have the following Apple-related books.

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Apple-II User's Guide (Osborne)
Apple II Monitors Peeled (Apple Computer)
Computer Station's Programmer's Handbook for the Apple
Micro/Apple (Micro Ink)

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These Apple books are balanced by a wide range of books about other computers and microprocessors. A small selection of these books would include the following titles:

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An Introduction to Microcomputers: Volume 0, The Beginners Book
An Introduction to Microcomputers: Volume 1, Basic Concepts

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Lance Leventhal's series on Assembly Language Programming:
--8080A/8085--
--6800--
--Z80--
--6502--
--Z8000--
--6809--

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CP/M User's Guide by Thom Hogan

The 8086 Book by Russell Rector and George Alexy
Some Common BASIC Programs by Lon Poole and Mary Borchers
Running Wild--The Next Industrial Revolution by Adam Osborne

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Everything in this outstanding collection, of which these are just a small portion, is on sale, so come in and browse. You'll find something you like.

FREE APPLE EXTENDED WARRANTY

Beginning August 10th, The Data Domain is provide a new "freebee" with the purchase of Apple systems. With the purchase of a complete Apple II computer system, you will receive at no additional charge, the Apple Computer Extended Warranty. And, for every software package purchased with a minimum price of $39.95 as part of this system, you will receive a free blank diskette. The minimum Apple system qualifying for this free Apple Extended Warranty is a 48K Apple II+, a Disk II drive with controller, a video monitor or an RF modulator, and $100.00 worth of software.

The Apple Computer Extended Warranty extends your initial 90-day warranty by a full year, including parts and labor. This Warranty normally costs $225.00. It also automatically includes any additional hardware you may add (with the exception of some peripherials not manufactured by Apple) and guarantees renewability.

In addition, we will include non-Apple boards we supply as alternative to Apple boards such as the CCS, Mountain Computer, and others. Exceptions to this are modem boards and the like which we are not allowed to repair because of FCC regulations.

This offer symbolizes our commitment to service and support your microcomputer after the sale,

CRT TERMINAL SALE
ANNUAL STUDENT/FACULTY SPECIAL

For the number-crunchers and other large computer users we have our annual special to make having your own C.R.T. terminal cheap and easy. This special includes a Terminal, Modem, and Cables. The package normally sells for $895.00 but the sale price is $795.00 ($825.00 with an extended warranty). This offer is good through September 10, 1981. The price is valid on sales paid for with cash or certified check. Delivery of the equipment will be from stock up to two weeks, depending on demand and availability. A deposit of $200.00 guarantees you your place on the list of favored purchasers. Come in and ask about the details.

IN THE NEXT SEVERAL NEWSLETTERS

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